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ABSTRACT

The federally supported Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) Program provides a minimum of $50,000 to local schools to engage in a comprehensive change process facilitated by the development and adoption of a comprehensive school reform plan, including technical assistance from an external model developer. This report summarizes the research design and progress of Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning's (McREL's) study of the implementation of CSRD programs in schools serving Native American communities. This study is part of a larger project involving three regional educational laboratories and selected CSRD-funded schools that serve a high percentage of Native American students. The purpose of this study is to investigate how these schools use the CSRD initiative to meet the needs of American Indian students and the different ways that tribal cultures have or have not influenced the adoption and adaptation of reform models. The progress of reform implementation will be examined by addressing the following research questions: What are the major contextual factors that influence outcomes? How did the model developer address the Native American context? What schoolwide reform model was chosen and why? and What has the school accomplished since beginning this initiative? Two rural K-12 schools in tribal communities have been selected and baseline data collected. Data will be collected via: document reviews; interviews with families, community members, and model developers; and observations of classrooms, schools, and communities. Future activities are discussed, and a final report will be completed by September 2000. (TD)

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EXAMINING COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL REFORM IN SCHOOLS SERVING NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITIES: PLAN AND PROGRESS REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the research design and progress on McREL's study of the implementation of Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) programs in school serving Native American communities. The federally supported Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) Program provides a minimum of $50,000 in financial support to local schools to engage in a comprehensive change process facilitated by the development and adoption of a comprehensive school reform plan, including technical assistance from an external model developer. This study is designed to ascertain the degree to which schools are able to successfully implement selected school reform models with assistance from the model developers in schools serving predominantly Native American student populations.

This McREL study, being conducted from August 1999 to December 2000, is part of a larger cross-laboratory project involving McREL, SEDL, WestEd and selected CSRD-funded schools in their respective regions that serve a high percentage of Native American students. The purpose of this study is to investigate how these schools use the CSRD initiative to meet the needs of American Indian students and the different ways that tribal cultures have or have not influenced the adoption and adaptation of the reform models. The progress of reform implementation will be examined in relation to unique contextual factors that exist in each site by addressing the following general research questions:

- What are the major contextual factors that influence outcomes?
- What did the model developer do to address the Native American context?
- What school-wide reform model was chosen and why?
- What has the school accomplished since beginning work on this initiative?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Site Selection

Three potential sources of school districts from within the participating laboratory's regions will be considered in selecting a study sample of schools serving large Native American student populations:

- recently funded CSRD schools,
- BIA schools funded under the CSRD program, and
- schools already engaged in comprehensive school reform programs and working with laboratories but not as part of the CSRD initiative.

Initially, the overall goal of the study site selection process is to identify two sites in each of the three laboratory regions that serve a range of tribal cultures and employ a range of reform models.

Data Sources and Collection Methods

The primary data collection methods will include formal and informal interviews, participatory and non-participatory observations, and document reviews. Interviews will be conducted with school and district administrators and staff, family and community members, and model developers who are available on-site. Classroom, school-wide observations and community-based observations will be used to illuminate reforms, the nature of the reforms in practice, and activities discussed in interviews. Finally, the review of related printed materials will assist in providing a comprehensive picture of each school's experiences and progress toward reform. Site visit activities and draft data collection tools will be developed and organized around the following three-stage study design:

- Stage 1: introduce researcher to key players in the schools and collect baseline, contextual and demographic data;
- Stage 2: collect data about on-site implementation, assistance and training for school staff provided by model developers;
- Stage 3: through interviews and observations, determine the progress made in implementing reform and identify outcomes realized to date.

Data collection instruments will be developed, reviewed and finalized during a February 2000 meeting of the McREL, SEDL and WestEd research teams. The expected data sources, data, and collection method associated with each major research question are listed in Table 1.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis will include constructing the form to which each school case history report will conform. Features at the school level that will be examined include the model selection process, tribal culture and language issues, community context, overall implementation process, model components, reform plan development, organizational changes, instructional changes, assessment tools, resource capacities, and administrative support of innovation and education improvement. At the district level, structural, organizational, human, and resource capacities and use will be examined. A rubric that quantifies degree of reform progress in selected areas will be constructed and revised, using an iterative process to incorporate emergent categories (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Erickson, 1986; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). A comparative examination of the case study reports, in view of the degree of change realized, will allow the identification of factors, policies, and practices that support or hinder the implementation of innovations in schools serving Native American students to the extent possible using the collected information.

Quantitative data analysis will include a comparison of the pre- and post-test data results from the district and /or school assessments with those from the school reform model assessments. Beginning with the reform implementation, students were assessed using pre-test tools provided by model developers. Successive post tests will be conducted at the end of each semester. Assessments are expected to continue throughout the course of implementation and depend on the length of the contract between schools and model developers.

Table 1
Summary of Data Sources and Collection Methods

Data Source	Information	Instrument
Question 1: What are the major contextual factors that might influence outcomes?		
Review of CSRD applications	Contextual history of school community, current and past socio-cultural economic demographics School reform/leadership roles Identified needs/how model addresses needs	Document analysis Coding form Case study write up
School principal School CSRD Coordinator Teachers Cultural Program staff	Contextual history of school community Match school goals, social, emotional, cultural, academic needs w/model Creating a fit between model, culture, academics Role of tribal community/culture in school reform Tribal community/culture influence operation and culture of school Fit reform with tribal community context Leadership roles/key people in reform Relationship among stakeholder groups/school Resources available/address needs Story of school reform	Interview Observation
District staff (Superintendent and Director of Curriculum and Instruction)	Support systems to sustain reform Contextual history of school reform efforts in district	Interview

Table 1 (cont'd)
Summary of Data Sources and Collection Methods

Data Source	Information	Instrument
Question 2: What school-wide reform model was chosen by the school and why?		
Review CSRD applications	Rationale for CSRD funding and the academic needs of students for the model selected Model fit w/school community initiatives Identified needs/how model will address them Stakeholder/Leadership roles	Document analysis Coding form Case study write up
School principal School CSRD Site Coordinator Teachers Cultural Program staff	Selection process Fit w/school-wide initiatives Stakeholder roles/goals/concerns w/model Role in the reform model selection Appropriate model for students/teachers Identified needs/cultural and academic Model fits needs of school/community/students Model fits w/tribal context/issues/concerns Development/implementation of reform plan Status of school-defined education reform plan Rationale for selection (student needs)	Interview Observation
District staff (Superintendent and Director of Curriculum and Instruction)	Status of complex education reform in district Roles in reform model selection Plans to evaluate reform/plans to sustain it Support systems for reform plans	Interview

Table 1 (cont'd)
Summary of Data Sources and Collection Methods

Data Source	Information	Instrument
Question 3: What did the model developer and school do to address the Native American context?		
Review documentation and products related to reform plan development and implementation*	The process of implementing school reform plans; i.e., training tech support, curriculum, instruction, assessments, more family involvement in the design and implementation of reform plan.	Document analysis Coding form Case study write up
School principal School CSRD Site Coordinator Teachers Cultural Program staff	Relationship with model developers Adapt model in terms of cultural context Adaptation made in training/tech support due to cultural context Fit between model and tribal context Challenges presented by tribal culture in reform Reform program builds on strengths/resources of community	Interview Observation
Model Developers	Assess situation when model enters school Relationship with school staff and administrators Adapt model in terms of cultural context Adaptation made in training/tech support due to cultural context Fit between model and tribal context Challenges presented by tribal culture in reform	Interview Observation

Table 1 (cont'd)
Summary of Data Sources and Collection Methods

Data Source	Information	Instrument
Question 4: What has the school accomplished since beginning work on this initiative based on stakeholder perspectives?		
Review documentation and products related to reform plan development and implementation*	The process of implementing school reform plans, i.e., training tech support, curriculum, instruction, assessments, more family involvement in the design and implementation of reform plan	Document analysis Coding form Case study write up
School principal School CSRD Site Coordinator Teachers Cultural Program staff	Training and technical support provided Changes in curriculum, instruction, assessment Changes in family involvement Evaluation/assessment process for reform plan Indicators of progress/impact on students Perception of model being appropriate so far District support for integrating culture in reform	Interview Observation
Model developers	Assess student response/progress to model Assess this school's progress as compared to other school's Indicators of progress/impact on students Factors influencing reform model specific to this school, i.e., tribal culture, language and tribal community context	Interview Observation

**Model training materials, activity and event flyers, handouts, calendars, lesson plans, newsletters, reform plan, strategic action plans, etc.*

PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS

Progress

Researchers at McREL, SEDL, and WestEd began designing this cross-laboratory study in Spring 1999. At that time, a collaborative process was set into motion to select schools located in or within close proximity to tribal communities. Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) directors contacted CSRD Coordinators of State Departments of Education and key officials at the Bureau of Indian Affairs to ask for assistance in identifying and selecting schools for this study.

Following the identification of possible study sites, principals and district superintendents were contacted to secure an agreement to participate. Because it is important that key players in the participating schools be receptive to a study process that requires close examination of their reform programs, the purpose of the study, the data collection methods, and information needs were carefully explained to local staff. After this initial contact, final site selections were completed in September 1999. Five study sites were selected. Table 2 provides data regarding school size, ethnicity composition, and percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch for the two schools selected from the McREL region.

Table 2
Demographics[1] of Schools in Study

School[2] / Community	Population	Context	%FRL[3]	% American Indian	% White
Hillsdale	470	K-12	92	99	1
Hill, NE	950	Rural		100	0
North Ridge	631	K-12	60	100	0
North, ND	5,000	Rural		100	0

[1]Source: CSRD Applicationnns, site documents, district accountability reports and National Center of Education Statistics 1995-96 Common Core of Data.
[2]School names are psuedonyms.
[3]FRL = Eligible for federal free and reduced lunch program.

Baseline data have been collected during the initial site visit to both Hillsdale and North Ridge schools using written interview protocols. The data collected includes demographics of school and community, and information relating to the design and implementation of the comprehensive reform program. During the second site visit, a broader range of interviews were collected to begin addressing planning, implementation, and progress realized to date.

Next Steps

Future activities for this study include additional research instrument development, data collection, cross-laboratory meetings, data analysis, and report writing. Two additional sites will be added from the McREL region. Data collection will continue through July 2000. Study progress will be reported in the contract and quarterly reports and a final study report will be completed by September 2000. Baseline data have been collected during the initial visit to both Hillsdale and North Ridge schools using written interview protocols. The data collected includes demographics of school and community, and information relating to the design and implementation of the comprehensive reform program. During the second site visit, a broader range of interviews was collected to begin addressing planning, implementation and progress realized to date.

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